

Brown Boxer

"USE THE UNION'S POWER"



A Response to Noel Massie

During the Christmas break many of us received a letter from UPS concerning our 8-hour job action on December 9, 1998. The letter signed by Noel Massie, or other Chicago-area District Managers, is another attempt by UPS to sow confusion and division in the ranks of our union. This letter is to respond to UPS's attack on our union and our right to strike.

Despite UPS's attempts to label our strike as illegal and irresponsible, the fact was that our strike was entirely legal and absolutely necessary to defend the integrity of our contract, that UPS has trampled on over the last year. Our right to strike was upheld by the U.S. District Court last Fall despite an incredibly expensive law suit that UPS ultimately lost.

Why Strike? While UPS seems totally bewildered by why our union called a strike against them. The real issue is why they didn't see it coming - the issues have been laid out clearly before them for the last six months. The union has 450 grievances over supervisors doing our work that UPS agreed to comply with but continues to violate every day. Ultimately our grievances have to be backed up by real muscle or UPS would eventually tear-up our whole contract.

While Massie and other District Managers seem concerned about the consequences of strikes on UPS's customer base the fact is that the strikes in August, 1997 and December, 1998 were provoked by UPS! Their "last, best, final offer" in the summer of 1997 would have stolen our pension, forced us all into HMO's, sub-contracted out thousands of full-time jobs and created no new full-time jobs. Clearly our 1997 strike stopped this nightmare from being imposed on us and we won the best contract we've had in twenty years. The recent job action was to protect what we had won.

UPS say that it is possible to be a good UPSer and a good Teamster at the same time. The real question is who is protecting the interests of the workers at UPS? Not UPS management! UPS have assaulted and fired our stewards. They unilaterally "nullified" the full-time jobs provisions of our contract despite making record profits this year. What will they nullify next? Clearly, protecting their business means boosting their profits at the expense of our contract.

It is only by building a strong, active union that we can protect ourselves and our families.

In Solidarity,
The Brown Boxer



December 18, 1998

United Parcel Service 1400 South Jefferson Street, Chicago, IL 60607
(800) 742-5877

Dear UPSer,

I don't enjoy my task at hand in writing this letter, especially at this time of the year. However, recent developments leave no choice. On December 9, 1998, the leadership of Teamsters Local 705 illegally struck our operations in the Chicago area during our customers' peak shipping season. Although short-lived, the service interruption damaged our reputation and hurt our continuing efforts to regain our customers' confidence after the 1997 work stoppage.

I'm not sure what the Local's leadership was thinking. If we learned anything from August 1997, I thought we had learned that strikes have consequences; that you can't leave your customers in the lurch without them reacting. Once again, as a result of this wildcat strike, there was a reaction. Existing customers diverted volume. And two large companies that literally were scheduled to sign contracts on December 9 saw the strike and went elsewhere. There went volume . . . and jobs.

What makes this so particularly distressing is that on December 7, we agreed to a meeting on December 9 to discuss various Local concerns. Then, 14 hours before the meeting, with no warning, the Local called a wildcat strike. Where is the logic?

As a result of these irresponsible actions, we missed our service commitment on thousands of packages. I don't need to tell you how important these shipments are to our customers, especially at this time of the year. Suffice to say that our reputation was tarnished at a time of year when we consistently come through for our customers.

I know this is hard to swallow for many of you. You see your customers every day and deal with their displeasure. You are faced with the task of rebuilding their trust and confidence in UPS. You've seen the volume shift to competitors.

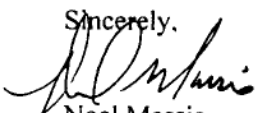
Despite the actions of the Local's leadership, I do want to reiterate that I believe you can be a good UPSer and a good Teamster at the same time. But when the leadership breaks a legal and binding contract to pursue some other agenda, you clearly have to ask if they're operating in your best interest?

Another point is clear, as well. This wildcat strike revolved around the creation of full-time jobs, not supervisors working. We were trying to address the issue. Now, our volume has been hit again. We don't know how much of that diverted volume will come back. By illegally striking UPS, the leaders demonstrated they don't care about lost customers, lost opportunities, and lost jobs.

I do want to thank those of you who worked to meet our customer commitments despite the Union's appeal to walk off the job. Many Local 705 UPSers put their stamp of disapproval on the Leadership's actions by remaining on the job. They, like thousands of other UPSers, saw through the Union rhetoric. We can only hope the Local leadership quickly comes to understand the damage done to our reputation and our future.

In closing, I hope to keep the lines of communication open throughout the coming year in order to strengthen the growth and protection of our business.

Sincerely,


Noel Massie
District Manager